UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Wilma & Clifford Smith Visitor in Music Recital: Boris Berman, piano

Monday, November 24th, 2025 at 7:30pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

Suite bergamasque (1890/1905)

Prélude
Menuet
Claire de lune
Passepied

Debussy (1862-1918)

Estampes (1903)

Pagodes
La soirée dans Granade
Jardins sous la pluie

Debussy (1862-1918)

Intermission

Preludes Premier Livre (First Book) (1909-1910)

Danseuses de Delphes: Lent et grave

*Voiles: Mod*éré

Le vent dans la plane: Animé
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir: *Mod*éré
Les collines d'Anacapri : Très m*od*éré
Des pas sur la neige: Triste et lent
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest: Animé et tumultueux
La fille aux cheveux de lin: Très calme et doucement expressif
La sérénade interrompue: Modérément animé
La cathédrale engloutie: Profondément calme
La danse de Puck: Capricieux et leger

Minstrels: *Mod*éré

Debussy (1862-1918)

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures.
Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

PROGRAM NOTES

Danseuses de Delphes (Dancers of Delphi): Lent et grave

Inspired by the top of a Greek pillar found in the Louvre on which three dancing Bacchantes are sculptured.

Voiles (Veils or sails): Modéré

Possibly inspired by the shimmering long silk veils of Loie Fuller, the American dancer who was famous in Paris at the turn of the century and well known to Debussy.

Le vent dans la plaine (The Wind in the Plain): Animé

The title is a line by the eighteenth-century French poet Charles-Simon Favart; it is quoted as an epigraph to Paul Verlaine's poem *"C'est l'extase langoureuse*", set to music by Debussy in 1887.

«Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir» (The sounds and fragrances swirl through the evening air): Modéré

This is line 3 of Charles Baudelaire' poem "*Harmonie du soir*", set by Debussy in 1887.

Les collines d'Anacapri (The Hills of Anacapri): Très modéré

The reference is to the village on the island of Capri in the Bay of Naples. According to some accounts, a wine bottle label served as an inspiration.

Des pas sur la neige (Footsteps in the Snow): Triste et lent

The source of this title has not been traced. Performance indications in the score direct the pianist to create a sound picture of a "sad and icy landscape" and to play the expressive melody close to the end of the Prelude "as a tender and sad regret".

Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest (What the West Wind has seen): Animé et tumultueux

Possibly inspired by the story by Hans Christian Andersen "The Garden of Paradise". Zephyr, the West Wind, "watched the mighty river fall from the rocks in clouds of spray and fly towards the clouds to meet the rainbow... [He] raised a storm that splintered the lofty trees to shavings."

La fille aux cheveux de lin (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair): Très calme et doucement expressif

The title is taken from the poem by Leconte de Lisle (set by Debussy around 1882), inspired by Robert Burns's "Lassie with the lint-white locks".

La sérénade interrompue (Interrupted Serenade): Modérément animé

The Spanish flavor of this Prelude is enhanced by allusions to *El Albaicin* from *Iberia* by Isaac Albeniz.

La cathédrale engloutie (The Engulfed Cathedral): Profondément calme

Inspired by the Celtic legend of submerged city of Ys off Brittany coast. On occasion, when the sea is transparent, out of the waves rises the cathedral of Ys, its bells tolling, its priests intoning; slowly to return again to the depth of the sea.

La danse de Puck (Puck's Dance): Capricieux et léger

Puck is the character in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* which Debussy might know in the 1908 edition illustrated by Arthur Rackham.

Minstrels: Modéré

American clowns in blackface whom Debussy heard in the promenade of Eastbourne in the south of England in the summer of 1905.

BIOGRAPHY

The artistry of Boris Berman is well known to the audiences of more than fifty countries on six continents. His highly acclaimed performances have included appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Gewandhaus Orchestra, The Philharmonia (London), the Toronto Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and the Royal Scottish Orchestra. A frequent performer on major recital series, he has also appeared in important festivals, such as Marlboro, Bergen, Ravinia, Nohant, and Israel Festival, to name a few.

Born in Moscow, Boris Berman studied at Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory with the distinguished pianist Lev Oborin and graduated with distinction as both pianist and harpsichordist. He performed extensively throughout the Soviet Union as a recitalist and appeared as guest soloist with numerous orchestras, including the Moscow Philharmonic and the Moscow Chamber orchestras.

In 1973, Boris Berman left a flourishing career in the Soviet Union to immigrate to Israel. He quickly established himself as one of the most sought-after keyboard performers, as well as one of this country's more influential musical personalities. Presently, he resides in USA.

Boris Berman has been the Founding Director of the Music Spectrum concert series in Israel (1975-84) and of the Yale Music Spectrum series in the USA (1984-1997). These concert series were hailed by the critics for the inventiveness of their programming.

Mr. Berman is an active performer of chamber music. He had appeared in numerous concerts and festivals with such artists and groups as Misha Maisky, Heinz Holliger, Aurele Nicolet, Shlomo Mintz, Gyorgy Pauk, Ralph Kirshbaum, Frans Helmerson, Claude Frank, Alexei Lubimov, Peter Frankl, Natalia Gutman, Tokyo Quartet, Vermeer Quartet, The Netherland Wind Ensemble and many others.

A dedicated teacher of international stature, Boris Berman has served on the faculties of the world's finest schools, such as Indiana (Bloomington), Boston, Brandeis and Tel-Aviv universities. Currently, he heads the Piano Department at Yale School of Music. He also conducts master classes throughout the world. In 2005, he was named a Honorary Professor of Shanghai Conservatory; and in 2013, a Honorary Professor of Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen. In 2017, he was given a honorary title of "Specially-appointed Professor" by China Conservatory in Beijing.

Mr. Berman's ability to recognize and commitment to nurture young talents are obvious reasons for him being invited to join panels of jurors of various national and international competitions, such as those in Leeds, Dublin, Beijing, Shanghai, and the Artur Rubinstein Competition in Tel-Aviv.

In the field of recordings, Mr. Berman's acclaimed releases on Philips, Deutsche Gramophon and Melodia labels were followed upon with 2 CDs of all piano sonatas by Alexander Scriabin for the Music and Arts label and a recital of Shostakovich piano works (Ottavo recordings), which received the Edison Classic Award in Holland, the Dutch equivalent of the Grammy. The recording of three Prokofiev Concertos with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Neeme Jarvi conducting (Chandos) marked the beginning of an ambitious project of recording the complete Prokofiev solo piano works. The first pianist ever to undertake this task, Mr Berman has released it on nine Chandos CDs to great critical acclaim. In addition, Chandos has issued Mr.

Berman's recitals of works by Debussy, Stravinsky, and Schnittke, as well as chamber music of Janacek, and - together with Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under Neeme Jarvi - Concerto by Stravinsky.

Berman's most recent discography shows the breadth of his repertoire: adisc "Debussy for Children" (Ottavo); two releases of works for prepared piano by John Cage (Naxos), which was named the Top Recording by the BBC Music Magazine; the Grammy-nominated Piano Quintets of Shostakovich and Schnittke with Vermeer Quartet (Naxos); and, quite unexpectedly, a recording of Scott Joplin's Ragtimes (Ottavo). In the Naxos collection of complete Sequenzas by Luciano Berio, Berman plays Sequenza IV for piano. For the recording of Brahms Sonatas with the cellist Clive Greensmith (Biddulph label) he used a 1867 Bechstein piano. Most recently French label Le Palais des Degustateurs released Boris Berman's recording of Brahms's Klavierstücke and Variations, and a double CD retrospective of piano works by Ukranian composer Valentyn Silvestrov.

In 2000, the prestigious Yale University Press has published Boris Berman's "Notes from the Pianist's Bench". In this book, Professor Berman draws on his vast experience as a performer and a teacher to explore issues of piano technique and music interpretation. The book has been translated to several languages. Mr. Berman is often invited to give lectures on these subjects in various universities and conferences around the world. In November, 2017 Yale University Press has published the newly revised version of the book electronically enhanced with audio and video components.

In the spring of 2008, Yale University Press has published Boris Berman's new book "Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas: A Guide for the Listener and the Performer". This book complements, and is based on, his highly praised recordings of this repertoire.

In 2011, Shanghai Publishing House has published a new bi-lingual edition of the scores of Prokofiev's piano sonatas, revised and edited by Mr. Berman. Based on manuscripts and first editions, this is the most authoritative edition of this repertoire available.

In 2024-25, Boris Berman is performing and teaching in France, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Spain, The Netherlands, and the USA.